

WARMINSTER URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Annual Report of Medical Officer of Health.

Warminster, February 2nd, 1903.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—Another period has arrived for me to present to you my annual report as to the health and sanitary condition of the town during the past year.

From the tables accompanying this report it will be seen that the deaths of eighty-one persons occurred in the town. From this number must be deducted six deaths occurring in the Cottage Hospital and Workhouse, of persons residing outside the district, which gives the actual number of deaths as seventy-five, equal to a death rate of 13·5 per 1,000. With the exception of one death from measles, no death occurred from zymotic disease. Five deaths occurred from phthisis and seven from cancer. The ages of death ranged from five hours to ninety-one years, and the deaths of persons over eighty years of age numbered ten.

The births numbered 102, equal to a birth rate of 18·03 per 1,000.

The following cases of infectious diseases were notified to me, viz., twelve cases of scarlet fever and three cases of erysipelas. Scarlet fever: Isolated cases were reported to me in April, May, and July, but in November solitary cases, to the number of four, kept cropping up at intervals during the month, having no connection with each other, but seeming to have a common origin, probably an undetected case attending one of the schools, which infected the above directly, or else spread the infection through articles in use in the school. Four of the cases having occurred in children attending the British School in the Close, I advised the closing of that school for a short period for the purpose of disinfection, with, I think, satisfactory results, as only one case, and that in an entirely different part of the town, has occurred since the re-opening. All the cases were of a very mild character, and seven were admitted to the Isolation Hospital.

I hardly think this hospital deserves the sweeping condemnation passed on it by the County Medical Officer of Health. That it is very imperfect as an Isolation Hospital according to modern requirements I freely admit, but I cannot agree with him that it is more conducive to the spread of disease than its prevention, in proof of which I can only find mention of very few cases of infectious disease in the immediate neighbourhood of the hospital for many years, and a little boy, the son of the caretaker, has lived under the same roof all his life, and has not been infected. Neither do I agree with him that the situation is bad, and I should certainly call it a detached building, not a semi-detached. Cases invariably do well there, and out of 119 cases admitted since the Notification Act has been in force here, only three deaths have occurred, viz., one from scarlet fever and two from diphtheria.

No cases of diphtheria or enteric fever have been reported to me, and we have been spared another visitation of small-pox. I am sorry that the house which Lord Bath kindly allowed us to rent for the purposes of a Small-pox Hospital during the epidemic last year is no longer available, and I think the Council should not be entirely unprepared should an outbreak unfortunately occur.

A number of new houses have been erected, chiefly at Woodcock and Imber-road, and these additional cottages, situated near the works of the two firms that employ a large number of hands, must be a great convenience to many.

The sanitary condition of the town compares favourably, I think, with other towns in the county. The system of sewerage is now complete; the town has a capital supply of pure water; the streets are wide, well paved, and nicely kept; and there is certainly an improvement in the lighting arrangements.

In accordance with the instructions issued from the Home Office in respect of the extra work entailed upon us by the Factory and Workshop Act, 1901. I find that little provision is made at any of the workshops as to means of escape in case of fire, but as most of the work in this town is carried on in workshops on the ground floor, and there are not a sufficient number of hands in any of them to cause a panic in case of fire, I think that, with the exception of the Shirt Factory at Pound-street, where the exits are decidedly cramped, that no provision is necessary.

The bakehouses have been thoroughly inspected, and are in a satisfactory condition. There is only one underground bakehouse in the district, and the rule applying to that will not come into force until next year.

The provisions of the Cowsheds and Dairies Order have been attended to, and the slaughter-houses have been regularly inspected and found satisfactory.

I have made monthly reports to you of the result of my inspections of the different parts of the town, and of the presence of cases of infectious diseases that came under my notice, and I personally investigated all such cases that was notified to me.

I beg to submit with this report the usual tables of mortality and prevalence of infectious diseases in the town, not only for the present year, but for the last decade, from which it will be seen that the death-rate for the past year is much below the average of the last ten years.

I am, Mr. Chairman & Gentlemen, yours faithfully,
FRED I. FLOWER,
Medical Officer of Health.

